

# SIGHT AND SOUND

AUTUMN 1942

VOL II NO 42

ARTICLES: AMERICAN LETTER  
THE FILM'S LIMITATIONS  
RE-EDUCATE GERMANY BY FILM  
THE YOUNG MR. PITT

CONTRIBUTORS: Alan Dent  
Herman Weinberg  
Bernard E. Gillett  
G. M. Hoellering  
Arthur Vesselo

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# Sight and Sound

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# KNOW YOUR ENEMY

By G. M. HOELLERING

*Mr. Hoellering is a great admirer of the English as well as being well known as the man who made Hortobagy. He is now engaged on the screen version of "Murder in the Cathedral". He has written this article because he believes that we must understand the differences in national characteristics between Germany and England if we are to make a good peace.*

ON ARRIVAL in England, one of the first things a foreigner notices is the way his luggage is handled. His trunk is stored in the luggage van. He gets no receipt. Contrary to custom on the Continent he is left without any proof that he owns luggage in the van. He is worried for the rest of the journey, but at his journey's end he gets his trunk without any difficulty. He is very surprised, considers himself lucky and thinks that next time he must insist on a receipt.

After some weeks he is short of money. He goes to his bank and asks whether any money has arrived for him from the Continent. The second time he is asked in to see the manager, who enquires whether he can help him in any way. The foreigner explains his transaction and says that his money must arrive any day now. The bank manager thereupon offers him a small overdraft. The foreigner thanks him, but replies that he has no security here to offer. The bank manager says: "That's all right; I trust you".

So it is throughout England, and I think here lies the main difference in the English and German character: the Englishman trusts everyone until he has reason to do the contrary—the German mistrusts you until you have proved yourself over a long time.

As far as it is possible to refer differences in outlook or character back to material causes, this could perhaps be explained to some extent by the divergent economic development of England and Germany. England was the first country to start what is now

called the "Industrial Revolution".

Germany was tied to feudalism, and the whole structure of feudal society was like a pyramid: the serfs at the bottom and the king at the top, each class held by strong bonds of duty and obligation to those above and below it.

The effect of these rules on economic theory was the doctrine of the just price. This was a price which enabled seller and buyer to live in their accustomed stations of life, and to charge more was considered usury. Under the stigma of usury came also the whole modern apparatus of credit, interest, discount, etc. It is clear that any society so constructed must be static, and that there can be little room in it for private initiative. But private initiative, especially in trade and industry, was the main characteristic of the Industrial Revolution. Therefore England, where feudalism was weak, had a much better chance to build up a modern industrial civilisation than countries in which it was strong, as, for instance, Germany.

The new industrial capitalist society which arose in England was based on the principle of *laissez-faire*. It is easy for us now to point out the fallacy of this theory, and List in Germany did so at the time. He pointed out that under a régime of complete international free trade there would be no room for more backward countries to develop. He therefore advocated the erection of tariff barriers to protect infant industries until they could hold their own in the world market.



## Effects of Feudalism

In a feudal society of the German type trust could hardly exist. But it is essential in a society whose social and economic activities are based on *laissez-faire*, for after all, unlimited *laissez-faire* would mean anarchy, and to keep society stable the State must either coerce people to do what is right, or people must tacitly agree among themselves to keep to certain rules, whether they can be legally enforced or not. In other words, people must trust one another. That was, and still is, the case in England.

In Germany, Prussia, which came more and more to dominate the rest of the country, had experienced a specially harsh form of feudalism. The old sense of the mastery of and submission to the reigning dynasty remained, and was strengthened by the long period of wars which the German States experienced and resulted in a warlike organisation and frame of mind. In fact, Germany was still semi-feudal until about the middle of the nineteenth century. Then the advantages England derived from her new industrial organisation were generally recognised as overwhelming, and Germany set about borrowing the new machine technique.

Starting at a time when the experimental period in England was more or less over, she avoided the "penalty of taking the lead", and just adopted the finished product. She was thus able to compress into a short time what it had taken England nearly a hundred years to accomplish and forged ahead rapidly. But whereas England had also slowly evolved rules of behaviour and custom suitable to the new technique, the old powers in Germany merely took over the new technique and used it for their old ends.

England had followed a policy of free trade from a very early time, and inside the country even the greatest industrial projects, as for example the

building of railways, had been carried out free of State interference by private enterprise. In Germany the State remained supreme. Industrialisation took place behind protective customs barriers, and inside the country the State largely controlled the adoption of the new industrial technique.

This went so far that the State even founded a series of technical colleges to train men in the use of machines, buying for them at least one specimen of each new machine built in the world, and offering prizes to anyone who could improve on them. And the very nature of the State was different. In England it was the new class which owned and controlled the new means of production which had gained power, while in Germany it remained more or less in the same hands as before—submission, obedience, no trust.

This difference in the development of the two countries has led to differences in character. Submission and obedience remained the main characteristics of German life. There was no room for the kind of trust which had grown up in England. Little wonder therefore that Germany remained politically reactionary from the western point of view, and that her use of the new technique led to aggression and war. In her schools education meant the acquisition of knowledge and the lesson of blind obedience. It is often said that the German educational system is very efficient; yet Germany ended up by accepting Hitlerism. This, I think, shows that achievements in the sphere of education, as well as in art or science, cannot make up for defects of character.

The English are destined to be the educators of Europe in good manners and good character, when she has won the victory. I place my trust in her then to find ways and means of curing the defects in the German character, which, I think, is the only way to ensure that there will be no renewal of German aggression.



# Re-educate Germany by Film

says C. T. de Jaeger

AS THE PROGRESS of the war is going more and more in favour of the United Nations with victory ahead, much is being said about the "Reconstruction of Europe" and the re-education of the peoples of the occupied countries but especially the Germans themselves. In the latter's case some favour very drastic methods of frightful revenge and extermination, but it defeats its own ends since Dr. Goebbels adds a few more lurid details, splashes them in his daily press and so induces the reader to suffer more privations for fear of retribution. Others again prefer kid-glove methods, but that is impossible too, for with the collapse of the Axis régime confusion will arise overnight in the minds of the Germans and especially German Youth, who will be disillusioned of those doctrines they were made to believe.

On the one hand this youth will have to be educated in democratic ideas of a peaceful world, based on the Atlantic Charter and friendship among nations. On the other, the older generation, which knew something of pre-Nazi days, will have to be re-educated and their trust in things restored.

## A Nazi Monopoly

For years the Germans have been propagandised by efficient films, a method of exploitation which Hitler realised immediately he came to power. Goebbels was entrusted with re-organising the film business and through the UFA which has been and still remains a commercial organisation, though financed with Nazi funds, purchased all independent cinemas in Germany and Austria. Soon the UFA Combine gained control of the Tobis Klangfilm, the manufacturers and monopoly hold-

ers of the Tobis sound recording and cinema projection equipment throughout the Continent. This sound system installed in all Continental studios controls all film output. The same applies to Bavaria Films, which completed the circle of film producing combines of importance in Germany. A few "independent" cinema owners remain but these too are controlled in reality by UFA. In this manner a most efficient production and distribution film organisation has been erected by Goebbels, controlling to-day in Germany alone 6,000 cinemas.

The quality of the feature productions has been maintained and no money has been spared to provide the German audiences with good though propagandistic films. Shorts and news reels contain exciting and impressive events of Nazi soldiers' successes with much faked material of the destruction of Britain for example, or of "victories" in Russia. In every possible manner a glorified version of Germany's New Order is given. Germans have thus been made 100 per cent film conscious.

## What then ?

On the cessation of hostilities and after the Nazis have been dealt with, what is to become of this vast and well organised film industry? Are the competent British authorities considering a plan of action to meet those future requirements? Or is post-war propaganda to re-educate Germans to be left to chance or be exploited by unsuitable people on commercial lines?

Just as this war started suddenly, so it will end. Then it will be essential to send an efficient unit of film experts, well versed from experience with Ger-



man audiences and conditions, immediately to take over the UFA combine, eliminate all Nazi influence remaining, and fill the gap with English and American films.

The first major production which MUST be distributed in every cinema in Germany, is the proof that the war guilt lies with the Nazis. It was they who terrorised Europe, kept Germany under false illusions, sent German Youth to death to satisfy the lust for power of a Prussian clique of unscrupulous criminals whose ingenuity hoaxed every German. It must show the horrors of war, the misery and sorrow it has brought upon them especially showing the false values of life as preached to them by Nazism. Once the Nazi war guilt has been established and the German realises that he has been beaten by a nation which can take it but give it back twofold and thus becomes unbeatable, then one can begin to re-educate them in the democratic ideas of a new Europe.

### **Films for Workers**

Other films which must be circulated are ones which clearly show the German working class man that neither the existence nor the welfare of himself and his family will be jeopardised in post-war Europe as was the case after the last war and greatly contributed to the rise of Nazism which seemed to offer him security and prosperity.

It must be realised that the working classes have again been mainly made to suffer and carry the brunt of disasters. It is they who again will be disillusioned in a doctrine, and their faith in talk alone and no action will be nil. This fear of a gloomy future as is being vividly painted to them by Goebbels in the event of an United Nations' victory, must be taken into consideration for future propaganda. Not only in Germany but throughout the Continent a revolution of ideas has taken place and all belief in the past de-

stroyed; a revolution which has not affected this country in a similar manner.

Film entertainment will provide their main relaxation again, but this time it should cover the life and traditions of other countries, as well as provide light fare as a contrast and relief to the continuous propaganda, dished up to every German for years.

To cover this wide post war field a film committee, if not already in existence, should be formed to prepare for that time. Many suitable British films can now be dubbed or commentated in German and ready for distribution at the word "Go".

### **Austria is a Special Case**

Although many unjustifiably regard Austria as part of Germany, and whatever her position after the war may be, it will be important to re-build the Austrian film industry, rally around it stage and film talent, and produce again those films which in the past delighted world audiences. British films especially will find very receptive audiences in those who through years of Nazi régime have again learnt to hate the Prussian boot. No mistake should therefore be made in presenting films intended purely for German audiences to the Austrian public.

The re-education of Nazi youth, and those youngsters in other countries, who fell under their spell, will be one of the major problems of post-war Europe. Tackled in the right manner and in a straightforward way, offering a healthy and stabilised outlook in life, the new outlook will find in them willing listeners who because of their youth, will adapt themselves to the future.

We must erase from their minds the ideas of the past and they must be shown the fallacy of using force as an instrument of national policy—and how better and more quickly than by film?



# A Critic Criticises

by ALAN DENT

film critic of the "Manchester Guardian" and "Time & Tide"

WHENEVER I go to a press-show of a film—it happens on an average four times a week—I am always faintly, and yet rather painfully, conscious that I am *in* the film world but not *of* it. I am a thing apart. I love the theatre, and I love the cinema; and I see plenty of room in the world for both institutions. But all my film colleagues, almost without exception, have an ill-concealed dislike of the theatre. Several of them openly declare that they never go near the tawdry thing if they can possibly avoid it, and all of them hate like poison the film which reminds them of a play. They like *The Little Foxes*, for example, *in spite of* the fact that it must have reminded them of a play, whereas I liked it because it was highly theatrical in the true sense of that abused word.

Let us, please, thrash this out and try to place things in their proper perspective. If the cinema is not the child of the theatre, what on earth is its parentage? It is, again, an exceedingly young child and a remarkably old parent. The film, as we recognise it to-day, has been in existence a bare thirty years. The European play, as we recognise it to-day, is at the very least twelve times older than that. To deny the disparity is to deny facts and figures. To deny the resemblance is to tell the child that, like the infant in the Savoy opera, it never had a mother.

The theatre has dignity and a great tradition behind it. The cinema has hardly any dignity because it is not old enough yet to have taken on that

quality. The theatre has an imposing list of noble names. Why should it not have, since it has all those years behind it? The cinema has produced only two men of genius as yet (Griffith and Chaplin, of course), some big showmen, and a dozen ingenious talents. As an art-form it suffers persistently and continuously from mass-production.

## Film Factories

It also suffers seriously from that pernicious system whereby the Hollywood film-factories assimilate every vestige of talent that bobs up anywhere in the wide world, and immediately set about flattening it and ruining it. In this they are almost invariably successful. At the moment of writing they seem to be succeeding at last in breaking down even the formidable individuality of good artists like Greta Garbo and Bette Davis. These are the two best serious film actresses of a decade. Hollywood for the last twelve months has forced them both to make asses of themselves in farces. Something even more sinister has happened to a group of clever Parisian film directors who went to Hollywood when they lost their country and have either (a) completely disappeared from ken or (b) bobbed up again without throwing off so much as a single spark of their former fire. And now here is the war embracing even Hollywood! Every prospect displeases, and man—especially the film magnate producing frantically against time and impending economic restrictions—is particularly vile.



I am well aware that it is my view, not of the cinema in general, but of film criticism as it should be practised which is requisitioned here. But it seems to me that the lie of the land should be indicated before the method of survey is explained. I have therefore sketched the lie of the land. My own method of survey does not, I suppose, differ markedly from that of all my other colleagues. I have, it is true, an ingrained and optimistic habit of expecting everything to turn out to be a masterpiece. One of my predecessors in this series says that this is a silly state of mind to take to the cinema. But if one does not possess some more or less exalted set of values, what has one? It is surely the very first essential of criticism to have a handy and workable cluster of criteria. If I see a light comedy, Lubitsch or lesser, I simply compare it with the very best light comedy I have ever seen on the screen—*The Guardsman*, with Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne. If I see a melodrama I willingly go away back to *Broken Blossoms* and measure it against that. If I am asked to witness an experiment, I compare it with the most startling experiment of recent years, *Citizen Kane*. If I am invited to a farce I decide at once how much there is in it of the combined comic force and pathos of *The Gold Rush*.

### Few Great Actors

The things which I expect and look for every time I go to the cinema are in this order *great acting* (a phenomenon which appears *pace* all my colleagues only once in ten years or so), good direction, good acting, good plot, good dialogue, and good music (with which I would conjoin an imaginative use of silences). Chaplin is the screen's one great comedian. Great serious acting, in small quantities, has been forthcoming only from Jannings, Baur, Laughton, and the two ladies above-mentioned. People who misuse the word and apply it to good artists like

Jean Gabin or Robert Donat or Spencer Tracy or Gary Cooper, are simply mistaking a mixture of charm, sex-appeal, and a high talent in expressiveness for greatness.

This is the one standard I am very firm about. Direction is a far more fluid and vagarious matter. So are the infinite varieties of sheer *good acting* which is often a very delightful thing. Good acting can—and very often has to—compensate us for banality of plot and dullness of dialogue. The best *good acting* on the screen is, in my opinion, that of William Powell and Myrna Loy in partnership. And they have the trick of inspiring good dialogue in the people who write for them. Music is almost always grossly overdone. The best and most tactful use of music in any film I can remember is that which Mr. Disney ordered for his *Dumbo*. But here again there is one concession to vulgar sentimentality—the deplorably mawkish lullaby. It need hardly be added that this has become immeasurably the most popular tune in the whole score!

### Or Critics

Film critics as a whole take themselves much too seriously when they are discussing their craft (at meetings and in magazines) and not nearly seriously enough when they are doing their job. Like the art they criticise, they are all very young. They have no corpus of good work to show, like the dramatic critics. How can they have? The single anthology of film criticism, Mr. Alistair Cooke's *Garbo and the Night Watchmen*, contains much delightful stuff. But it also contains a deal of drivel already dated. At the least, it is seldom dull. Whether one is right or wrong, with the mob or against the mob, one should always be *readably* with or against, *entertainingly* right or wrong. Dullness is six out of the seven deadly sins of criticism. The seventh is insincerity.



# The Pace That Kills . . . .

by

Elizabeth Cross

IN SPITE of all the million-dollar-merchants can do films are still managing to whiz along too fast for our humble brains to grasp, or dodder and halt until we faint with boredom. Some also manage to show a startling lack of proportion, which seems due, too, to bad timing.

## Hey Presto

Some of our cherished vintage films cause innocent mirth by reason of the glorious way the characters hurry through the scenes (though we suspect the operators have a hand in forcing the pace). It is so irresistible to see the hero fling down his deerstalker, his arms round the heroine and himself out of the old homestead all in three seconds, and with a lot of jerks thrown in free. We think we've said goodbye to all that, but have we? Cutting has been brought to a fine art, but some studios are cutting it so very fine that a scene is whisked away before we have grasped what it's all in aid of. For instance, some of us yokels would like another and a longer look at the night-dress that was displaced for a split second in *Pride and Prejudice*, and then disappeared while its owner assured us that mother hadn't seen it and a few more words to that effect which we didn't quite catch.

Lest we appear captious and ungrateful let us add hastily that we appreciated this particular film immensely, the more so for having waited a year or so to see it. At the same time we felt that someone had been having a whale of a time with the scissors during most of the action but had mislaid them, rather unfortun-

ately, at the very end. We refer to the pathetic finale when Mr. Darcy (Laurence Olivier to you) opens and shuts his mouth while gazing spell-bound at Elizabeth Bennet (Miss Greer Garson, who had not then quite managed to shake the dust of her dramatic school from off her feet . . .) This painful scene, which reminded us forcibly of our pet toad when faced with a juicy fly just a little *too* far away, went on and on until the gallant Canadian soldiers who made three-parts of the audience, felt constrained to offer a little practical advice to the static lovers.

## Private Cutting?

But why? I mean why pare this perfectly delicious entertainment down to its pretty bones, and yet leave us seemingly æons in which to admire Mr. Olivier's heaving breast and parched mouth until he manages to utter "Elizabeth!" Here I must suggest, lest the producer send a minion to slay me in my humble hedge or ditch, that it is highly possible that the original film proceeded more sedately. It is possible that by the time I and my fellow provincials see *any* film it has been so bandied about and generally ill used that it has come a-two in somebody's 'ands and they've had to stick it together here and there with that stuff that smells of peardrops. After all, when our kind father brought down films for our Christmas parties we noticed how fragile the stuff was and how often it tore and fell off some mysterious thing called "the sprocket", causing much parental wrath. Maybe most of the films I see and am be-



wildered by have fallen off many sprockets and been stuck together again, making the pace more and more rapid with every untoward accident.

But no, that cannot be the whole explanation, for before Hitler interfered with our lives and before I became immured in my country's mud, I spent some considerable time at Trade Shows where, surely, a film must be as long as it is likely to be, and as new and free from mishaps. Yet I can recall many films that seemed erratic in their timing, rather as if the producer (or whoever we may blame) said to himself, "Oh, a scene with a horse and trap . . . must we? Oh, well, if you've actually got the horse here I suppose we might as well . . ." And they filmed it and there it was, but it didn't matter much one way or another, so they cut it right down instead of cutting it right out.

### Softly, softly

However I must not continue to complain over the haste, and the confusion arising from this haste, for I must say still harsher words to those peculiarly English producers who are still so SLOW . . . so slow that we wilt and wish we had lots of chocolate paper to rustle and ice-creams to lick so that by the time we have finished making ourselves objectionable to our neighbours some of those boring old boys in a typical English inn will have finished saying "Oh aye, I remember when I was but a young lad . . ." and so on and so on, while a few apple blossoms flutter against a cloudy sky for long minutes. The Ministry of Information may be patted kindly on the head for some films but there's somewhere else it could do with a good kick as well for the deplorable timing that it sometimes perpetrates. Or perhaps that's the wrong Ministry to blame for the sort of official films that tell you not to waste water and how beer is made and so on.

Timing, proportion, the general rhythm of any film must be largely a matter of personal taste and opinion. Even so, it must equally be possible to formulate some kind of basic rules and principles. The art of the cinema is not still so young that we have no masterpieces or near-masterpieces to use as measuring sticks. In any case there should be some guidance in the mere proportions of the "story" where a film based on a book or play is concerned. Naturally the film version will and should be completely different, but it must bear some relation to the original conception and should also have something of the same proportions.

### Please wait for the laugh

Finally, it would appear that talkies have not yet learnt the art of "waiting for the laugh" as has the experienced stage actor. This does not apply to definite "music-hall" types where there is often an almost painful pause for laughter, but to the light comedy and drama that is salted with a certain amount of witty dialogue. Where a speech may arouse laughter please give us a little action without further speech so that we can enjoy our laugh happily without cursing our noisy neighbours because we've missed the following remark.

To all gifted cutters, "Bless you, but don't be too ruthless," but to many English studios, "Buy a Large Pair of Scissors . . . and use them."

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¶ The Institute is always receiving requests for old numbers of SIGHT AND SOUND. Most of these can still be supplied, others cannot. We shall be glad to re-purchase *any* back numbers, but we are specially in want of copies of the spring issue 1933, and the autumn issue 1933 and the spring issue 1934.



# American Letter

By Herman G. Weinberg.

AT THIS moment of writing, John Ford, Frank Capra and Garson Kanin are in the U.S. Army, producing films for the Signal Corps, leaving the problem of providing film-fare for the "home-front" to their colleagues. Not necessarily as a result, since Hollywood for a long time now has failed to deliver an all-round first-rate piece of work, i.e., something one could "sink one's teeth into", the past quarter's cinema menu has been considerably deficient in those vitamins which keep films from having a narcotic or soporific effect on audiences. Film lullabys like *Moontide*, *This Above All*, *Jungle Book*, *Tortilla Flat*, *In This Our Life*, *Reap the Wild Wind*, *The Spoilers*, *Tuttles of Tahiti*, and *My Gal Sal* have become the equivalent of the opium smoker's poppy since Pearl Harbour awakened America to the fact that the Axis is not kidding. Unless, through some miracle, they get better than they have been, so-called "escapist" films are through for the duration, though why we should rely on miracles is hard to understand when there is dramatic material of such terrible urgency all around us. Not that some of the above named films won't earn fortunes for their producers, thereby "refuting" the whole point of my argument, but I think that is rather beside the point at this moment, or does Hollywood think it is living on the moon? Besides, the Government has decreed maximum incomes, after deduction of taxes, of \$25,000 a year, so what good are "fortunes"? So long as a single plane is lacking in China, in Burma, Australia, Russia or Libya, producers of meretricious films, however puissantly endowed with the Midas touch, are gleaming pyrrhic victories.

## Moontide and Tortilla Flat

Jean Gabin, looking sadder and older than ever before, stalks half-heartedly through *Moontide*, a jejune copy of *Quai des Brumes*, substituting an unshakable optimism for the pessimism and fury of the latter. Ida Lupino gives it what credulity it has. I have no quarrel with optimism—we are a nation of optimists and in the long run that quality is irresistible—but in art, as in life, one should not compromise with the truth for the sake of whatever expediency. *Tortilla Flat*, on the other hand, has a disarming kind of optimism indigenous to its characters, the gentle *paisanos* of our South-west, and is as a consequence believable, although the film is woefully miscast; John Garfield, Allen Jenkins, John Qualen and Spencer Tracy being no more like half-breed Mexicans than you or I. Hedy Lemarr makes a stunning eye-full as a "Portugee" girl, but if *Danny* had acted as he would have done in real life, we could have been spared the all-too-familiar burst of self-sacrifice at the end which mars the film's lyricism.

Hitchcock stretches credulity to the snapping point in *Saboteur*, but compensates for it by providing us with several taut moments and typical surprises, and in the extravagant finale which occurs in, of all places, the torch of the Statue of Liberty. Symbolically or not, it's a humdinger of an idea, and the plastic values achieved here, as well as in scattered moments throughout the film, are equal to Hitchcock at his best, which is very good indeed. Hitchcock, who usually casts his shockers with unerring precision, maintains this flair with his enemy



agents in *Saboteur* which, while it is not to be mentioned in the same breath with his superb and still unsurpassed *Thirty-nine Steps*, will hold your curiosity right to the very end. One film that could be mentioned in the same breath with *Thirty-nine Steps*, although for quite another reason, is *My Favourite Blonde*, a flagrant plagiarism of that film's central idea, with even Madeleine Carroll involved in the proceedings to make matters worse. As a vehicle for Bob Hope it asks for and gets many laughs as a farcical spy comedy, but I do wish it hadn't reminded me at every turn of its plot of the quiet humour, delicate irony and altogether superior film making of Hitchcock's unforgettable original.

### A Mixed Bag

Before *Gone With the Wind*, *Reap the Wild Wind* would have impressed us as quite a spectacle. After it, de Mille's latest brainstorm is at best a faint echo of that King Kong among films. Everything's in it but the proverbial kitchen-sink and I'm sure the boat that is so sadistically wrecked in it carried a kitchen-sink in its cargo. Which leaves *Roxie Hart*, a sentimental nosegay tossed at the fabulous twenties during which America went through its growing pains, and which to-day seems curiously ancient and unreal, like a bad dream; *Joe Smith, American*, with some solid virtues as an anti-Nazi film; and *This Above All*, which makes one want to ask, This above what?

### Mrs. Miniver

A better film not because it is by any means a satisfying piece of work, is *Mrs. Miniver*, which William Wyler has fashioned from Jan Struther's novel of war-time England. I disliked the casting, which is too pat, the stuffy cosiness of many situations and character portrayals, and the obvious twists of the story which tele-

graph their arrivals minutes before they come. Its craftsmanship is better, however, the control over the players is surer, and one episode, the flotilla of small boats chugging down river to evacuate the British soldiers at Dunkirk is startlingly dramatic. A sequence wherein somewhere from the depths of a light cruiser the small boats are told of the great emergency in which they have been called upon to play a life or death part, with the cruiser swinging off as the unseen voice wishes the men in the small boats good-luck, in its use of sound and image is worthy of Eisenstein. The economy of statement with which the camera makes its closing comment is also cinema at its most eloquent. Wyler has become one of our most dependable directors, and I hope some day he will be given free rein to make the film he is capable of.

As for the rest, Richard Oswald's remake of *The Captain of Koeppenick* has only the saving grace of an honest performance by Bassermann in the rôle made famous by the late Max Adalbert; Robert Flaherty's *The Land* is a big let-down from the poet who made *Moana*; and *The Gold Rush*, re-issued by Chaplin in a somewhat abbreviated form with commentary in place of the former captions spoken by Charlot himself, is only occasionally still funny, wherein it differs surprisingly from Chaplin's considerably older short films which are still as diamond-perfect as they originally were. Perhaps it is because the long stretches of pathos have attenuated the film's comedy and slowed up that ballet-rhythm which has always been so essential to a Chaplin comedy. And it doesn't help, either, that the pathos in *The Gold Rush* is, let us face it, no longer pathetic. Fashions change and no place more quickly than on the screen. Viewing *Major Barbara* again, however, was a delight. How literate it is, how charmingly played, what verve it has! Verily, the play's the thing, and Shaw is the playwright.



## Some New Films

Some months ago the Soviets completed the filming of *Schweik*, which seems like an odd sort of thing for them to do right now, but I anticipate no film with greater glee than the possibilities inherent in this virile satire by the late Czech novelist, Jaroslav Hasek. Chaplin, who himself might have done *Schweik*, if this had been the best of all possible worlds, will direct, but not appear in, Paul Vincent Carroll's *Shadow and Substance*, which seems like an odd sort of thing for him to do. And Jean Renoir, who should have been given Elliot Paul's *The Last Time I Saw Paris* to make, is, in this most contrary of all worlds, assigned to a Deanna Durbin film. To complete a quartet of oddities for the past season, Saroyan's *The Human Comedy* will not be directed by him after all, M.G.M. having decided he was too "inexperienced". Despite the fact that Saroyan calls it "the best scenario ever written", it is a pity that we will be put off witnessing the début of this really original talent as film director. After heaping his scorn on the producers for their littleness, Saroyan recommended Victor Fleming or William Wyler to direct his story. Since then, he has completed a new play, *Get Away, Old Man*, which he has offered to Hollywood, sight unseen, for a quarter of a million dollars, which, finding no takers, he has at this writing raised to the highest film bidder "over and above the established price of \$300,000". He recalled that sum as having been paid by Twentieth Century Fox for Steinbeck's *The Moon is Down*, a record film price for a play that, incidentally, was a flop on Broadway. If all this sounds like something by Scheherazade out of the Arabian nights, that's Hollywood.

## Other Plans

Another anti-Nazi play to be filmed this year is Lilian Hellman's *Watch on the Rhine*. There is a possibility

that Renoir will be given his first real opportunity, in collaboration with Dudley Nichols, to do a film on the Nazi occupation of Belgium, with Charles Laughton starred. Meanwhile, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* still remains, at this writing, uncast in several principal rôles, though the rumour that the locale will be changed from Spain is, I hope, only a canard perpetrated by some wise-guy who thinks nothing is too extravagant for Hollywood. Lubitsch will do a Hungarian play, *Birthday*, by Ladislaus Bus-Fekete; and Orson Welles has completed *The Magnificent Ambersons* and *Journey into Fear*, his second and third productions. Currently he is in South America on his fourth film, *It's All True*, whose first of four sequences is set in Rio de Janeiro. Duvivier's multi-starred *Rails of Manhattan*, a kind of super *Carnet de Bal*, promises well, and I hope Rene Clair's new film, *I Married a Witch*, upon which he and Preston Sturges are collaborating, will make the most of these two splendid talents and vindicate Clair as an American director. Joris Ivens is in Canada working with John Grierson on a film of life in the Canadian Navy for the National Film Board. The censors are still holding up Howard Hughes' two-million dollar production, *The Outlaw*, the third film Hollywood has made on the life of Billy the Kid, principally, it appears, because Jane Russell, who makes her début in it, is revealed by the camera to possess a chassis so disturbing to the male animal as to tempt one to regret the invention of equal temperament.

## Bambi

I have just seen *Bambi*, the new Walt Disney film, which is stated to be the last feature-length Disney for the duration, now that his studio is engaged on a large-scale programme of educational films for the Government in the war effort. I am therefore glad to be able to report that even if *Bambi*



never touches the peaks of whimsy, charm and humour that Disney's studio of busy little elves achieved in *Snow White* (or, for that matter, in moments of *Dumbo*), it is a boon to a world that, at this moment, is very much in need of its gentleness, its innocence, its guilelessness. True, it lacks something of the classic spirit of the tale of a life in the woods as Felix Salten told it—its humour being sometimes alarmingly more akin to Broadway and Hollywood boulevard than to the forest primeval—but I suppose "audience-necessity" determined that. It also has a tendency to be over-cute for long stretches and to make the audience feel superior to the animals on other occasions, by caricaturing them, which is altogether out of keeping with Salten's reverence and love for his creatures. But no one can really accuse Disney, for long, of *lèse majesté* where animals are concerned. If the female skunk is a vulgar repetition of the "Mae West" gold-fish in *Pinnocchio*, the little male skunk is most lovable,

as is "Thumper", the rabbit, the wise old owl and, most of all, the fawn, Bambi. Over all is the air of enchantment that the Disney artists know so well how to conjure, bits of tenderness from fondly remembered childhood—the world as ineffable wonder and endless delight.

Lest I appear unduly harsh with Hollywood this quarter, Etta Pollano (who wrote *The Importance of Being Angry* in the Autumn, 1939, issue of SIGHT AND SOUND) saw all of the films reviewed in this report with me and found merit only in *Tortilla Flat*, *Saboteur* and the Dunkirk sequence in *Mrs. Miniver*. A cynic once defined a critic as a man who writes about things he doesn't like. Someone else, less given to amusing *bon mots* for their own sake, stated that criticism is based upon the decay of the art criticised. As to those who subscribe to Destouches' dictum that "Criticism is easy and art is difficult", I am reminded of that wise man who said that art was either easy or it was impossible.

## Evelyn Russell on This Quarter's Films

THERE IS no doubt that the outstanding British production since our last issue is *Next of Kin*. It is a war film, of course, and one is inclined to say there has already been a surfeit of war films, but this one is different. It was made with no eye on the box-office and in that it is unique; it was not made originally for the general public. Perhaps because of this it has been brilliantly made and succeeds in no uncertain manner in warning troops and civilians as vividly as possible against careless talk. This human foible is

common to all peoples and it would surely therefore be an excellent idea for all who can see and hear to be reminded again and yet again of the possible consequences of their own thoughtlessness. The decision not to allow this admirable film to be shown to our allies is puzzling, even short-sighted. Leaving attaché cases momentarily unguarded is NOT peculiar to the British and I do not suppose for one minute that any audience in the world would imagine that it is.



## Co-operative Possibilities

An interesting experiment, which certainly succeeded, is *Our Film*, made on the co-operative basis. A short propaganda film with a punch, it was made by the workers at Denham Studios from ideas submitted by technicians, actors, regular script writers, directors, etc. All concerned gave their services free. Would it not be a good idea if all film companies encouraged workers in the studios to submit ideas for regular consideration and discussion? Fresh angles on film-making might be disclosed; we might even find an Orson Welles in our midst.

In *The Young Mr. Pitt*, Carol Reed has indeed proved his worth. It is, to my mind, the finest historical film we have made. The period detail is impeccable, the casting and acting quite superb, and, wonder of wonders, the history unfolded is as near to the truth as make no odds. Using a good deal of William Pitt's actual speeches in the most admirably reconstructed House of Commons scenes, Robert Donat gives a faultless performance and epitomises the quiet determination of a courageous and deep-thinking man trying to guide his people inexorably through the mire of doubt and slothful weakness to victory. History repeats itself, not only in the film but in actual fact, and *The Young Mr. Pitt* is excellent propaganda. It is impossible not to hear in Mr. Pitt's impassioned speeches, not to see in his dogged insistence our own Winston Churchill. This historical film has certainly made film-history and every one concerned in the making deserves the highest praise.

There is an excellent propaganda value, too, in *The Day Will Dawn*, dealing as it does with the underground movement in Norway for freedom from the Nazi yoke. What a brilliant idea to interpolate the actual Vaagso raid news reel sequences for the grand rescue finale!

## Praise for a Newcomer

*The Foreman Went to France* with a story based on fact and sincerely produced without melodramatics, must be added to the small list of first-class British war films. It was interesting to watch the very natural performance of Gordon Jackson, a new-comer to the screen, whose complete absence of tricks might be noted to advantage by quite a number of experienced players. Tommy Trinder, too, took care to guard Tommy Trinder's personality and become Tommy Atkins. The first Tommy peeped over the shoulder of the second for a flash once—or perhaps twice—a look in the eye, nothing more, and may be forgiven.

But I found it more than irritating during *Those Kids from Town* and *Let the People Sing* to see in the one, Mrs. Feather and in the other "The Voice of Inexperience" taking the floor instead of the foster parent and young son of a doting mother that these two artists were supposed to be representing.

There has been a great improvement in the quality of English sets during the last year. Staircases no longer vibrate as artists run down them, nor do walls shake when a door is slammed. The homes of the well-to-do are furnished as they should be and the less fortunate are being given adequately convincing consideration. The temptation to over-elaborate simple sets is, perhaps, the natural temporary sequence to this new carefulness. I could wish, for example, that the splendid apartment house run by the hero's sister in *Suspected Person* might be duplicated in real life—at the very modest prices asked by the landlady in the story.

## Near Perfect

The fault is not ours alone, however. American producers have succumbed, too, in the cottage interior in



*How Green Was My Valley*, in the old English pub interiors in that unusual and most moving war love-story *This Above All*, which proves yet again the brilliance of Joan Fontaine and Producer Darryl F. Zanuck. In the same film English platforms are noticed to the public as Track 3 and Track 5 and a W.A.A.F. band on the march sports a very showy drum-major. Now, the latter incident may have its precedent over here in fact, but if so the secret has been very well kept. Hyper-criticism you say? Well, all right, but it is the little things that stick out a mile if they are wrong in an oasis of near perfection.

There is the obverse of the penny as always. Alexander Grach as the Gestapo agent trailing the hero in *Joan of Paris* is quite unforgettable. He said nothing but saw and heard everything and the inevitability of his catching up with his prey, squeaky boots and all, added more than a little to the suspense and excitement of the story.

Just as memorable are the performances of Thomas Mitchell as Jonah Goodwin and John Qualen as Olaf Johnson in *Out of the Fog*. These two inoffensive old gentlemen who believe only in peaceful association and whose idea of heaven is to fish for a couple of hours in the harbour, become fortuitously involved with a protection racketeer. How they struggle through mentally to the determination to rid themselves of their persecutor that they may once more fish in peace in the harbour calls for the very thoughtful, sincere and moving interpretation that each artist gives so brilliantly.

There is a touch of genius in Frank Morgan's characterisation of Pirate in *Tortilla Flat*, a film that is out of the ordinary both in conception and execution. The forest sequences and the lighting in the vision scene there are inspired. Or should one say unconventional? Perhaps so. Then, generally speaking, a little unconventionality in

lighting or for that matter in filmmaking itself would not come amiss.

## A Good Thriller

That is perhaps why I liked John Huston's direction of *The Maltese Falcon*. The son of a famous father—who incidentally plays a very small part in the film, for luck, perhaps—John Huston has used with effective moderation the idea of the camera seeking and emphasising some characteristic, mental or physical or both of its subject rather than its ordinary form. This approach has undoubtedly added to the strength of the very fine performance of Sidney Greenstreet as Kasper Gutman, the arch-crook, and Mr. Huston has been wise enough to confine the idea to one character only. His lighting and camera work is unusual in what would normally be unnoticed sequences. For example, a telephone on a bedside table with night-light upon it from the open window plus a side-lamp, the speaker being out of the picture, but the voice heard. In other words, the picture of a telephone conversation. The story is strong of itself with an unusual ending and fine acting, but it is the treatment which makes it the best thriller so far this year. *Johnny Eager* is a good second, not because of treatment so much as of the different story-angle and the superb acting of Van Heflin as the drunken, philosophising friend of gangster Johnny, so unexpectedly well played by Robert Taylor. Van Heflin has since specialised in scientific detection, vide *The Kid Glove Killer* and *Grand Central Murder*. I doubt if such casting gives him the opportunities he deserves, admirable as his performances are in these two well-directed films.

The careerist wife-discontented husband theme is stale but *Woman of the Year* is undoubtedly the best of them. Katherine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy, with an excellent supporting cast, have managed under the able



direction of George Stevens, to bring more sincerity and depth of feeling to the situation than is usual. The camera work and lighting generally help to make the film stand out.

The war theme has been dramatised, sentimentalised and pulverised one way and another. It takes a brilliant man to satirise it successfully. Ernst Lubitsch deserves that epithet for his direction of *To Be or Not to Be*. The subject of the film may be considered by some as unsuitable for such treatment but the object of the film—to show how despicable and fallible are Nazi aims and methods is to my mind highly commendable.

What the object was of *The Man Who Came to Dinner* I would not know. At a guess I should say simply to amuse. In that it undoubtedly succeeds. Clever direction, deft production and admirable acting, to say nothing of witty, even though expurgated dialogue, make the film more entertaining than the stage play.

Entertainment is accepted by many as the chief object of film-making, but no adult should forgo the agony of seeing *The Defeat of the Germans Near Moscow*. It is grim, it is horrible, but it is salutary and it is the truth, at which none of us should dare to boggle. All those responsible, even in the humblest capacity, for its being made and distributed deserve full marks for courage.

We have heard from a reliable French source that early in June the Germans issued a new decree. They have ordered all films in the occupied territory (positive and negatives) made previous to 1938, to be destroyed and delivered to them.

It is understood that these are not being junked and then the raw material made into film again, but that instead they are to go into the chemical war industries. Our correspondent also believes that the move has a deeper political significance.

## An Open Letter from Herbert Hyman

MR. EDITOR,—It has been my lot for some years to view films with the object of assessing their box-office potentialities, and I have lately put to myself the question: What is the most vital factor in the making of screen entertainment?

The obvious answer would seem to be "The Story". This, however, is a superficial view and second thoughts would lead to a different conclusion. Experienced viewers will be able to recall many instances of films whose stories have been basically good, which have been staged on a generous scale and which have been played by a thoroughly competent cast, headed by popular stars, but which have been failures from the standpoint of entertainment.

They will also remember films whose stories have been puerile, but which have been converted into good entertainment. What is the explanation? In my opinion it is the treatment that makes all the difference, the directorial touches, the little something that some directors have and others have not. It is, in fact, the work of the director, more than any other single factor, that makes or mars a film.

Again, how is it that some screen players are so successful in some films and indifferent in others? It is because they are either well or badly handled by the director.

A good situation is often thrown away by a director who does not know his business, but, in the hands of a competent and resourceful one, every ounce is extracted from its possibilities.

I might perhaps best illustrate my point by referring to two familiar types of film. First, let us take the Western drama. Here, roughly speaking, the



story is practically always the same. Most Westerns are commonplace, machine-made affairs, but a good director can infuse renewed life and interest into the dry bones and hackneyed yarn.

The other type of film which I have in mind is the marital comedy, of which there have been many examples in recent years. It is almost always about a young married couple who, through disagreement or misunder-

standing, quarrel, are estranged and are ultimately reconciled. Some of these films, although no fault can be found with the cast, and the production and technical qualities are sound, have been poor; some have been lukewarm; whilst others have been sparkling entertainment. The same answer applies: The most important single factor in the making of film entertainment is the work of the director. I hope your readers will agree!

# The Film's Limitations

by

Lt. Arthur Vesselo, A.E.C.

IN THE old days, when films had not yet become respectable, it was a popular habit to attribute wrong-doing in the young and unruly to the influence of the cinema; and it is still occasionally possible to find newspaper accounts of juvenile crime in which the youthful accused is reported as having said that he "saw it on the pictures".

We have, however, reached the stage where it is also possible to take an opposite line, and to assert in fact that the film can be used directly as an inculcator of social and moral values. The Russians took this attitude firmly a long time ago. We over here have followed very hesitatingly, but our documentary producers have from the beginning held the Russian approach up to us as a model; and at present, in war-time, we have the example of the three-minute M.O.I. films to show that the idea is spreading its roots.

It is worth asking how far the film can undertake to instil in us correct notions of how we ought to behave. Is

it true that the film, rightly handled, can become a great and powerful moral teacher? Or are the cynics right? Is the film, by its very nature, cheap mechanical trash, without hope of improvement?

Most readers will no doubt straight away condemn the second view as violent, prejudiced, mischievous and ignorant. It is all these; but somewhere deep down inside it there is a germ of uneasy half-perceived truth. The truth is not that all films, just because they are films, are forever damned: it is that the film as a medium has certain inherent limitations of form which make particular tasks exceptionally difficult for it to carry out effectively.

Few people, one supposes, would argue hotly for the normal feature-film as a teacher of right living to the populace: if we want precepts and examples, they are hardly to be found amid the atmosphere of the romantic formula and the happy ending. Yet the shakiness of the everyday cinema's



social and moral postulations has its origin not only in the inadequacy of film-makers as a class: it has an equal origin in the film's own nature. The film is at its best when dealing with action, with concrete situations which can be directly portrayed; and the conveying of complicated generalities to the mind by such means is a difficult matter if not an impossible one.

The film's assertions, striking immediately upon eye and ear, are forthright and sweeping, and characteristically so. The hedgings, the qualifications, the due envisagement of alternative solutions, which are proper to a profound and philosophical consideration, are quite alien to them. But the fundamental moral and social problems are not simple, downright, yes-or-no matters, to be dealt with in an hour-and-a-half of pleasing fiction: they are problems with which all the philosophers of all the ages have wrestled, and wrestled, and often wrestled in vain.

### **Superficiality**

That is why so many of the well-meaning anti-war films of the thirties failed so completely of their purpose. In as far as they were trying to convince the man-in-the-street of the ultimate worthlessness of war as such, they were battering against an already wide-open door. But when it came to the infinitely more complex question of how exactly war was to be avoided, they had little or nothing to offer. The apparatus at their disposal was inadequate to cope with it. They never pierced below the surface of the problem; and, when they did not merely preach a negative, peace-at-all-costs attitude, they ended up, as often as not, by confusing all the issues and probably glorifying what they had intended to cry down.

The amateur, in those sad days before the deluge, was frequently urged by his mentors to stop going off for long-winded cruises, or bathing the

baby, and to go in boldly and tackle the fundamental issues—of Life and Death, War and Peace. How wrongly conceived were these urgings—how vacuous and over-simplified their results!

What is the sum of all this? Does it go to prove that the cinema had better keep right off social and moral values, and confine itself entirely to the æsthetic aspect of things? Not quite. Such a conclusion is hardly possible, since every film which in any degree tells a story must, *ipso facto*, point some kind of a moral. The query rather is, what kind of a moral? And how should it be pointed?

In its dealings with the broad, basic values of human existence, we had better agree that the film is unfitted ever to do more than pose one or two dramatically - upholstered questions, leaving made-to-measure solutions severely alone. If it succeeds in stimulating a little thought, without the slightest pretence to finality, then it has served a sufficient purpose in this field.

### **Slogan Punching**

It is when we get to the less profound, more immediate issues that the film, as a teacher of moral lessons, comes more closely into its own. The smaller and better-defined the sphere, the more easily the film can operate. Be careful on the roads; Shop early and avoid the rush; Immobilise unattended vehicles; Save petrol—these are the types of precept that the film can most readily drive home to us. They are specific, they can be vividly detailed in a short space: they have little in common with the eternal values, but they have more immediacy, and their greater concreteness makes them more suitable film-material.

Somewhere between the two extremes come the Russian films of the later 'twenties. Taken as examples and guides, these can be and have been misleading. It is not true, as many



have imagined, that the films of Eisenstein and Pudovkin came starkly up against the ultimate realities. They were able to state their cases so clearly and forcefully only because they worked within an orbit where the ultimate social problems were taken as solved. The Communist ideology of the period furnished a rigid track along which the train of their ideas propelled itself.

In a social environment where such *a priori* assumptions are by a long way less definite and less universal, this mode of approach is closed to us. It is the same disability that the Protestant theologian labours under, as against

the Catholic. Where authority is roundly laid down, directives for action become concrete: where thought is relatively free even on fundamentals, things become more obscure, more difficult to disentangle.

So, however disillusioning it may at first seem, the sum of it appears to be this. The film can in no circumstances solve our problems for us: what it can do is, a little superficially perhaps, to encourage thought on certain topics; or, more immediately, it can help to spread and emphasise the particular items of a gospel whose main course has already been clearly and fully determined.

## Second Thoughts

Bernard E. Gillett

(The Film Institute's travelling Educational Representative)

VARIETY IS SAID to be the spice of life, and I am certainly disposed to think that this is true. In the course of my travels through the length and breadth of England and Wales, meeting directors of education, teachers, training college tutors, and students, I experience a variety of conditions, activities and problems, which is denied to most people engaged in education. There is always a tendency, when one is tied down to one's native heath to regard achievements as the best that can be accomplished under existing circumstances, or, if one is doing little or nothing, to regard local difficulties as insurmountable.

Thus it is that I find some Local Authorities who did some pioneer work in films in the early 1930's, are content to look back and rest on their oars, while others in a similar position, while proud of their contribution to present technique, are anxious to profit by the experience of others and im-

prove the work they are still doing.

The more I travel, however, the more I am convinced that the method of using films in the majority of schools leaves much to be desired. The greatest fault is that teachers *will* try to ape the cinema, rather than carve out their own technique. It is still an all too common practice for a "programme" lasting an hour or more, to be shown to the whole school. The cinema atmosphere prevails—or rather an atmosphere which would not be tolerated in a cinema, where ventilation and temperature are under control. The children see a number of films, not connected with each other, usually scarcely related to the syllabus of instruction, and, as if to emphasise the fact that education is not the aim, I am told, "We usually throw in a cartoon or a comedy".

This is often the case when an Education Director accepts the offer of an outside organisation to tour the



schools in his area with films on some very worthy subject. The organisation often provides films, apparatus and operator, but seldom teaching notes on the films prior to the show, so that the teachers can prepare the children for the films. The operator is usually an operator and nothing more, who says nothing about his films, even if he could, and considers the show a success if the film does not break, a fuse blow, or the lamp burn out. He is very seldom a teacher, neither does he attempt to learn how the technique of teaching with films differs from the technique of cinema entertainment.

### A Poor Show

I recently saw such a show. The programme lasted an hour and a half and consisted of six films. The films were entirely unconnected with one another. Every one was good, and each might have had very great teaching value, had it been used alone. The room held four hundred children, and the volume of sound was sufficient for a thousand, the operator may have been deaf, but he never moved away from his machine in order to discover what the sound was like when the noise of the machine had not to be overcome. To cover the changing of reels, Sousa marches were played on an electric turntable, again as in the best cinemas, but for some reason I was unable to appreciate, the volume was doubled. My own reaction at the end was one of relief, and a desire not to hear films again for a long time.

What a pity that excellent material should be misused in this way, how tragic that little or nothing is learned from these shows, and that children come to regard them merely as a break from normal routine, which gives the staff a rest, and themselves a chance to be merely passive. More unfortunate still is the fact that such misuse makes real educationists feel there is no future for the film in school, and gives parents, and those ratepayers with no children of their own, another chance to criticise

the expenditure of time and money on such things.

Strongly as I would condemn such misuse of films, this must not be taken as the complete story. There are teachers who *use* films, and their number is growing. These are the people who book the individual films they require a long time ahead, and who take the trouble to obtain information about the contents of each film so that they can prepare the children for the film and also do revision work on the film afterwards. As with school broadcasts, this method is not merely desirable, but essential, if the film is to take its proper place as a method of teaching.

### Get 'em Young

How can we remedy this position? First, I think, by seeing that all young teachers, coming out of training colleges, are trained in the technique of using films as a teaching method. Until members of their staffs are sufficiently conversant with this technique, they should take advantage of the facilities offered by the Institute for lectures to their students. No training college lecturer would consider his or her work complete if the use of the blackboard for notes and diagrams had not only been taught, but also seen in operation during school practice periods. The film, radio, and the gramophone are modern additions to teaching method and their correct use should receive equal emphasis with the older methods.

Here, I am confident, valuable work was done in the Nottingham Film School, which was organised to give training college tutors the most up-to-date information on the use of the teaching film. The school was compressed into four very full days, the lecturers were all people of long practical experience in the making or use of teaching films, and in addition some twenty hours were spent in seeing a comprehensive selection of available teaching films on all subjects.



Essential though I consider instruction in the training colleges to be, this only covers the teachers of the future. What of the teachers at present in the schools? It is not enough to say that by training the present students we shall have, in twenty years' time, a teaching profession trained to use films. Nor is it enough to say that this can wait until after the war. A whole generation of children is going through our schools now which will never make up the leeway caused by an education sorely upset by the war. If we are to produce a nation capable of organising a post-war world, we shall not do it by allowing education to slide back during the war. Education will be needed, not less but more, after the war, and we shall not produce an educated democracy if we fail to advance during the war. Government Departments, the Services, and Civil Defence organisations have all realised that the film has a rôle of ever-increasing importance to play in propaganda, training, and the spreading of new ideas. Surely this is equally true in the schools, but it has not yet been realised as fully by many of those responsible for education. The film and projection apparatus are not luxuries, but necessities, if education is to keep pace with the world.

### The Art of Using

What has not been sufficiently realised in the Services or in the schools, is that there is a technique of using films, they are not a means of doing away with the instructor or teacher, and will not serve their proper purpose if they are merely "shown" without a useful contribution being made by the teacher. They do not always allow the teacher or Service instructor to recite his piece, which by long repetition he has learned almost by heart, but demand that he shall *teach* if he is to obtain the full benefits of using the film. This is caused by the fact that the film can portray with much greater clarity

and detail, many things which even the best oral teaching leave vague. There is a very great need for teachers to be trained in the technique of teaching with films, as distinct from handling the apparatus. It is not sufficient to say that such a course was held three years ago, personnel changes and advances in technique make frequent courses necessary if teachers are to keep themselves *au fait* with developments. They will not take to films as a duck takes to water and it is a waste of valuable time to allow everyone to learn by his own experience.

### Some Proposals

Further ways by which the standard of using films might be raised are:—

- (1) That Directors of Education and their local inspectors should discourage the mass showing of programmes of films, and satisfy themselves about the educational value of films given by outside bodies; in this way such bodies would find it to be in their own interests to evolve different methods of approach for schools and Women's Institutes.
- (2) Libraries might also decline to supply "a programme of films to last an hour—your own choice", a request often received by some of the film libraries.
- (3) Teachers' Film Groups should foster the discussion of methods of teaching with films and might even award certificates of proficiency or recognise in some other suitable way those teachers who have realised and shown that teaching with films is an art not a pastime.

We who believe in the potentialities of the film in education should see that we are obtaining the greatest possible educational value from its use, otherwise we have no right to call ourselves educationists, or to fritter away the all-too-short school lives of the children who pass through our hands.



# The Young Mr. Pitt

Reviewed by Dr. Rachel Reid

*The Young Mr. Pitt* is, from the historian's point of view, a film of quite unusual excellence. Not only has very great care been taken to make the setting historically correct and to eliminate anachronisms; the story has been treated with exceptional regard for historical truth. This alone would make the film an outstanding one; but its method also is interesting. No attempt has been made to present a play with an invented plot and dialogue.

The story of the younger Pitt's life is presented in a succession of episodes; some, such as the scenes with his father, the great Earl of Chatham, may be only *ben trovato*, though even these are in keeping with all that we know; but in the main they are quite authentic and the dialogue consists very largely of recorded conversation and speeches. Admitted that the author of the scenario and the producer had a very great advantage in that the subject and period are exceptionally well documented, it remains very greatly to their credit that they have resisted so well the temptation to "improve" on the facts. The result is a film of very great interest and real value, which should be very popular with the general public as well as with schools. Interest is heightened by the introduction of scenes showing Talleyrand (very good), Napoleon and Nelson, for, truth to tell, apart from his spectacular rise to power, Pitt's life was not exciting, nor even very interesting, although the times in which he lived and the events which he helped to shape were of the utmost interest and importance.

The casting is on the whole good. Robert Donat does well as the young

Mr. Pitt, though one misses the pointed nose which was such a godsend to the caricaturists, and he appears to prefer showing Pitt as unbending among his friends rather than as holding his colleagues at a distance. To substitute an unhistorical pillow-fight for the historical blacking of the youthful Prime Minister's face with lamp-black is perhaps excusable or at least understandable. Fox and George III are also well cast; but the same cannot be said of Napoleon, who at the time of Toulon was just a spare, keen-eyed Corsican very unlike the stout Emperor of the French of later days; two actors were really needed.

## Small Errors

Good as the film is, one or two points do call for criticism. The House of Commons in 1783 was not really so senile as it appears here. It suited Gillray to represent Pitt's opponents as dotards howling down brilliant youth; but in truth, many of them were only a few years older than himself. Again, did women join in an election crowd in the eighteenth century? A Duchess of Devonshire might canvass votes for Fox with kisses, but women had no votes and few rights, and their men-folk generally kept them in their places. Then too, Pitt's rise to power is made even more spectacular than it really was by the omission of reference to his eight months' office as Chancellor of the Exchequer with which his ministerial career began. He owed this to his then unusual knowledge of arithmetic and his study of "The Wealth of Nations", and it was his success in this office which marked



him out for the Premiership at a time of financial crisis. His kinsmen who suggested to the King that he should be made Prime Minister, could manage the House of Lords for him; it was his business to control the Commons and win the country.

In the ordinary "historical" film, it is the love-interest which is usually the most unhistorical feature; here it is really historical, though Pitt himself, when writing to the lady's father to refuse the offer of her hand, gave as his reason, not devotion to England, but inability to pay his debts. Apparently,

he did not understand that a wife might have kept him out of debt by looking into his household accounts and reducing bills for nine hundred-weight of meat a week to more reasonable amounts. His servants might well love a master who allowed them to plunder him so unscrupulously.

Finally, it may be noted that the film, besides being sound history, is excellent propaganda, stressing as it does the duty of giving all for the country to which we owe all that we have and are.

## *The Cinema goes to the Patron*

Hector McCullie

*[Recently appointed Inspector of Cinemas to E.N.S.A.]*

THE REPORT of the Cinema Officer, "ENSA", shows that in twelve months mobile cinema vans travelled 1,111,896 miles to give 17,792 performances to the Service audiences which from August, 1941-April, 1942, totalled an attendance figure of 2,341,620 persons. During the latter period 33 "Static", or Garrison, cinemas, gave 4,422 film shows to an aggregate audience of 2,195,895 persons. The figures are impressive even as cold mathematical data, but how much more so on the warmer and more human side.

"Somewhere in England" is often a place only a pin-point on a large scale ordnance map, where at a lonely "Ack-Ack" or Searchlight site, a handful of lonely watchers, watch not to-night for the enemy, but also for the "ENSA" cinema van with its promise of much-needed and well-earned recreational entertainment. Up goes the cry "Here's the film boys! Come and get it!" Willing hands unload the heavy equipment, and that bare and lonely Nissen hut is quickly converted into a

cinema where almost magically an audience of perhaps eight, or maybe eighty, are to enjoy two hours of up-to-date and popular film entertainment.

The men who take this entertainment into the remotest spots of this Island are unsung heroes. Ice, snow and blizzards do not stop them,—the show must go on, and go on it does! The audience is waiting and looking forward to that show, and the rigours of black-out driving in mid-winter will not stop it. There are men driving and operating who are conceited about one thing only, who boast only of one thing, who have one record they are fearful of losing, and who with a note of pride in their voice, tell you, "I didn't miss one show last winter!"

There are cases where it has been impossible to drive any van up the steep and uncharted cart tracks which often lead to the "Cinema". There the van has been stopped half a mile down the road and its operator-driver, assisted by hard-bitten warriors, unloaded and carried the heavy



equipment up to the lonely outpost.

There are other stories of shows interrupted at 9 p.m. on a dark and cold winter's night, and sterner work of tracing and chasing "Jerry" indulged in for two or three hours, and at midnight, when all is clear, the cheerful invitation from the Ensa operator, "Well, boys, let's finish the show off." No thought has been given to the discomforts of driving through that black-out and frozen wilderness in the early hours of the morning,—those boys want to see the remaining five reels of Mickey Rooney's adventures, and their wishes come first.

### Garrison Theatre

At the "Static", or Garrison Theatre, we find the same splendid isolation of site, although the isolation would be more difficult to tolerate were it not for the splendidly equipped and roomy Garrison Theatre in the camp. Here, either once, or twice nightly, the boys and girls flock to see the up-to-date entertainment which ENSA sends them—three or four changes of programme per week, two hours of first-class film show, all for 3d., 6d. or 1s.

What a power this film is! In that second row is that great big man-mountain of a sergeant-major. Well, would you believe it! He has a spark of human warmth and kindness undreamed of, for in this particularly tense and thrilling sequence of the film, he almost fatherly, takes the hand of the little A.T.S. girl seated next to him in an almost protective and consoling manner.

Then there are the extraordinary persons who make up this large audience. Take "Buzzy" for instance. A big, bluff Canadian whose wrinkled and hard-bitten countenance beams at you and says, "Yes, brother, I see every show here—I know this film business backwards and forwards". It transpires that "Buzzy" has worked with most of the Hollywood stars and

directors. Proudly from the pocket of his battle-dress blouse he draws a large packet of letters, smartly embossed with the names of famous "stars", who regularly write to him from Hollywood in terms of affection. Quite modestly he tells you that he was earning 150 dollars a month in Hollywood, but as he came over here in 1918, he thought he'd "like to see the Old Country again and how she was looking, so I went and got myself togged up in this private's outfit." Truly an example of the spirit and service of United Nations.

### Good Audiences

No theatre in the world ever held a more appreciative and discriminating audience. Deanna Durbin has just finished an operatic aria, and wonder of wonders, here is an audience which breaks out into applause right in the middle of a film and at the last note of what would be considered by many commercial cinemas as "rather too highbrow". ENSA has found that it is fatal to play down to them, but an absolutely safe bet to play up to them.

There is drama behind much of this film entertainment, the strenuous efforts made to see that on the rare occasions when through transport or other difficulties films are late or some vital piece of equipment requires attention, those films are secured or the equipment is replaced in time for Garrison Theatre to open as advertised.

Co-operation, the spirit of service, self-effacement, and hard work from all concerned, make it possible for the show to go on to the best effect in the most difficult of places and circumstances.

If the patron cannot go to the "pictures", all right, we'll bring the pictures to the patron. Even Mahomet would have shunned to prophesy so, especially with the mountain of difficulties to be overcome.



# There Should be "Dramatic" Films in History Teaching

By R. S. Miles

DR. RACHEL REID in the Summer Number of SIGHT AND SOUND, raised the question of films for use in the teaching of history.

While I, as a teacher of History, am grateful to Dr. Reid for bringing the subject into the limelight, I must dissent from her remarks about the use of the dramatic in such films. Potential makers of history films will find themselves confronted with the same problems that have faced the publishers of history text books and history teachers, viz.: "What shall I include?" The book publishers surmounted the problems partially by putting out a bewildering number of books. The individual teacher relying upon his special studies, predilections and knowledge of his pupils chooses the most suitable of these books and builds his syllabus around them.

## The Value of the Vivid

Similarly the makers of films must make them on many subjects for differing ages and in differing styles. Films of social life are necessary. So are diagrammatic films but, I would suggest, dramatic films are just as necessary as either of these two. In fact even more so. The stimulation supplied by carefully selected dramatic episodes will help the cause of history teaching far more than any other kind of teaching—including dramatisations by children. History teaching, particularly at the elementary stage, depends for success so very much upon "atmosphere" which most people will agree can be more successfully conveyed by films

which can portray authentic-looking architecture, costumes and manners than by the improvisations of classroom or school plays. Johnny Smith dressed in a sack remains Johnny Smith to himself and his class-mates. He does not become St. Augustine as was fondly hoped, whereas a film on the same subject with characters appropriately garbed in apparently contemporary albeit canvas, surroundings would transfer that class far more effectively to Canterbury in 597 A.D. And that seems to me to be the best aim of history teaching at an early stage—the capturing of the essential spirit of any age.

## U.S. Examples

Strangely enough the article immediately previous to Dr. Reid's in SIGHT AND SOUND illustrates the point I would make. In it Ezra Goodman writes: "The Commission of Human Relations of the Progressive Education Association has with the co-operation of various studios produced hundreds of human relations short subjects in the form of excerpts from existing non-current photoplays. The Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, with the co-operation of Cecil B. De Mille and Professor James Shotwell, made a feature film *Land of Liberty*, a drama of American history compounded of sequences from 125 different pictures and news reels".

Replace the back-breaking title of the American Society by the British Film Institute and consider what it could do for history teaching in this country. The Film Institute is sug-



gested because there must be an organisation of acknowledged standing to break down the distributing companies' reluctance to grant away a shred of their copyright and also because the Film Institute is in touch with both producers and users. I know that the companies will take some persuasion for copyright means to them hard cash and that is naturally their touchstone. Ultimately the permission to use their films would increase their revenues. School and entertainment would meet at a half-way house to the benefit of both.

### Bits of Feature Films

My proposal is that the major producing companies should allow excerpts from their films to be made and used as educational films—as has been already done in U.S.A. Films like *Lady Hamilton*, *The Private Life of Henry VIII*, etc., are obviously unsuitable for showing in schools, but various episodes may be extracted at very little cost, and presented as illustrations of lessons. The number of educational films which could be made is enormous, owing to the large number of films available. In particular a big percentage of history teaching films could easily be made. *Cleopatra* had some sequences which could be of immense value in the teaching of Ancient History. *Ben Hur*, *Quo Vadis* and *Sign of The Cross* would provide excerpts for which any teacher of Roman History would be very grateful. *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *The Vagabond King*, the many pictures on the French Revolution would provide excellent material for a far-reaching series of lessons on French History.

### Social History

*Elizabeth of England*, *Drake*, *Mary of Scotland*, *Private Life of Henry VIII*, *Tudor Rose*, *Fire Over England*, provide grand sources from which extracts

could be made to cover that glorious dawn of Modern England. It is obvious that with some little thought, or, better still, access to companies' files, an imposing list could be compiled. That list need not stop with 1870 or 1914 as does most history teaching. The films of modern life in America—the development in transport, communications, furnishings, costume, etc., are the background against which many great and small dramas are played. Cut away these stories and there remains an amazingly documented account of the modern world, which when compiled with extracts from say, *Rulers of the Sea*, *Stage Coach*, *The Man Reuter*, *Wells Fargo*, *The Iron Horse*, and others, provide the finest possible illustrations of evolution in social history. I feel quite sure that if we do not regard these films as "source books" of modern history future historians will definitely do so. There is a logical historical development from *Stage Coach* to *It Happened One Night*: from *The Covered Wagon* through *Union Pacific* to the films using the trans-continental airlines as their raw material. And so on.

### Anglo-American Friendship

It would not be fair to close this section without referring to the fine series of films on Imperial topics made in Hollywood—*Clive of India*, *Bengal Lancer*, and others. Here History teaching and Anglo-American friendship could meet on common ground, for these films could be distributed to the American schools, while, in return, I would beg the Film Institute to secure copies of the films of American history mentioned by Goodman to help the teaching of American History now going forward in our schools. From this point of view the question is urgent and needs tackling now. The representatives of the Companies and the Institute should get together as quickly as possible.



# News from the Societies

## BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE

The Carnegie Campaign came to an end at the beginning of May. On another page of this issue Mr. Gillett, the Institute's representative, has written a second article conveying some of his impressions. His final report has been passed by the Governing Body and it is hoped that it will be published early in August and reviewed in the next issue of SIGHT AND SOUND.

The Governing Body have added £50 to the generous gift of £200 by Messrs. Cadbury in order to make up the sum necessary for first year's expenses of the experimental lectureship in Visual Aids at the University College of the South-West, of which the holder is Mr. Patrick Meredith.

At the request of the Board of Education the Institute is trying to get together from American sources a collection of classroom films to be used in British schools for teaching our children something about the American life and scene. A first list has been prepared and has been sent to some of the Institute's educational contacts in the United States for criticism. It is hoped that a few films at least will be available by the time that the next school year starts.

The Board of Education has decided to include in the Youth Organisers' course at Leicester a lecture on Film Appreciation, as well as a demonstration of types of film which can be used for direct instruction and for stimulating thought and discussion. The Governors welcome this sign of official appreciation of the enormous part that films play in the life of the average citizen.

The Institute's Education Panel has set up a special sub-committee to consider the place of the film strip in teaching. They also have in preparation a new pamphlet on *The Technique of Visual Education*, which will be a companion volume to *Choosing a School Projector* and *Using School Projectors*.

The Panel has made a further series of suggestions to the British Council as to new films which could be made to amplify their geographical and Biological series. At the next meeting the members intend to consider what new series could profitably be undertaken.

The Home Office has renominated the Hon. Eleanor Plumer as its representative on the Governing Body. Mr. F. W. Baker has also been renominated by the Kinematograph Renters Society and Mr. A. C. Cameron by the British Institute of Adult Education.

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## NATIONAL FILM LIBRARY

Mr. David Rose, of Paramount Pictures, has agreed to present copies of Paramount films for preservation. The National Film Library is now for the first time in a position to obtain films on request from all the principal producers and distributors.

The two new blocks of specially designed storage vaults at Aston Clinton are now completed. Though it is uncertain what the official demand for storage space is likely to be, it is hoped that this accommodation will suffice the Library for at least another year or eighteen months.

The London Film Society has agreed to hand over its collection to the National Film Library for the duration of the war and a year thereafter. The films are now being examined and catalogued.

A large number of films have been received for preservation. These include:—  
From A.B.F.D.: *Dann Rudd, M.P.*; *The Ghost of St. Michael's*; *Target for Tonight*.  
From United Artists: *The Thief of Baghdad*.  
From Columbia: *Angels over Broadway*.  
From Warner Bros.: *All This and Heaven Too*, *No Time for Comedy*, *Sergeant York*, *Atlantic Ferry*, *The Letter*, *Underground*, *The Great Lie*.



From M.G.M.: *Strike Up the Band*, *Philadelphia Story*, *The Marx Brothers Go West*, *Gold Rush*, *Maisie*, *We Who Are Young*, *Waterloo Bridge*, *Boom Town*, *Escape*, *Dulcy*.

Amongst the early films which have been bought on the recommendation of the Selection Committee, are 20 early news reels; 6 pre-1900 films including a Méliès and 2 Lumières and half a dozen immediate post-1914 war features.

A general inspection of all the pre-1908 films is being carried out. Points which are noted are fading, shrinkage, stains, discolouration, scratches, perforations, buckling and crinkling, and finally, the adhesion of the emulsion to the base, for in a number of old films this was found to be happening at the edges and it would be only a matter of time before the whole frame disappeared.

The number of borrowings from the Loan Section continues to increase.

#### BELFAST FILM INSTITUTE SOCIETY

The season's activities have now ended and the Treasurer's and Secretaries' reports have been presented to members. In all eight shows have been given during the winter, as against the six of a normal peace-time season, and many of these shows have been of quite exceptional quality. Five of our feature films have been French—*La Marseillaise*, *Gens de Voyage*, *Zero de Conduite*, *La Femme du Boulanger* and *Le Roi S'Amuse*. Two have been Russian—*Chapayev* and *Musical Story*, and one Czech—*Janosek*. A very wide variety of documentary and cartoon shorts have been shown, including as usual a few abstract and experimental films.

French comedies remain the most popular attractions, probably because of the character acting: a star like Raimu is a great draw at the box-office and some really popular films are needed to make a balanced season.

During the winter the Society was lucky in securing the use of a very pleasant cinema for its shows, after spending two seasons in exile in a public hall. As a result members were able once again to enjoy not only comfortable seats but very good projection and sound reproduction.

Financially the Society broke even on the season, ending as it began with a very small credit balance. Plans will soon be on foot for the next winter, and it is hoped to circularise members by the end of September. In any case publication of the Society's monthly "Film Review" will then be resumed.

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#### FILMS COUNCIL OF THE S.W.

The Area Film Library now serves 128 sound projectors and 27 silent machines. In the last report the numbers of film bookings over a four-months' period were 1,624 and 124 respectively, sound and silent. Films on Russia have been easily the most popular among Ministry of Information films, but the demand for films on the Services is very steady. It is gratifying to note that film damage has been substantially reduced.

The establishment of a Lectureship in Visual Education at the University College of the South West gives a new status to the position of the Secretary of the Film Council. To mark this milestone the lecturer, Mr. G. Patrick Meredith, convened a one-day conference on Visual Education at Exeter on June 20th. The world of films, of education and of administration were represented, members coming from London, Oxford, Birmingham and Bristol. The list included three well-known names: Miss Mary Field, Dr. Otto Neurath (of "Isotype" fame), and Professor Lancelot Hogben, F.R.S., as well as the ever-popular Mr. Gillett, of the British Film Institute. Divergence of opinion in this relatively new field was anticipated and our expectations were amply realised. Well informed disagreement is essential to progress. The conference was lively, stimulating and successful. We have every intention of following it up.



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Before the war Gaumont-British were privileged to co-operate with Education Authorities by supplying their well-known Sound-on-Film Equipment as well as their Educational film productions. Plans are being made now for post-war educational re-construction. Great care and much thought is being given to the problem so that Gaumont-British Films and Equipment will again be able to play its important part in the education of the younger generations.

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